

The True Meaning of Christmas

Author unknown

Late one Christmas Eve I sank back, tired but content, into my easy chair. The kids were in bed, the gifts were wrapped, the milk and cookies waited by the fireplace for Santa. As I sat back admiring the tree with its decorations, I couldn't help feeling that something was missing. It wasn't long before the tiny twinkling tree lights lulled me to sleep.

I don't know how long I slept, but all of the sudden I knew that I wasn't alone. I opened my eyes, and you can imagine my surprise when I saw Santa Claus himself, standing next to my Christmas tree. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot just as the poem described him. But he was not the "jolly old elf" of Christmas legend. The man who stood before me looked sad and disappointed. And there were tears in his eyes.

"Santa, what's wrong?" I asked. "Why are you crying?"

"It's the children," Santa replied sadly.

"But the children love you," I said.

"Oh, I know they love me and the gifts I bring them," Santa said. "But the children of today seem to have somehow missed out on the true spirit of Christmas...and it's not their fault! It's just that the adults, many of the not having been taught themselves, have forgotten to teach the children."

"Teach them what?" I asked.

Santa's kind old face became soft – more gentle. His eyes began to shine with something more than tears. He spoke softly. "Teach the children the true meaning of Christmas. Teach them that the part of Christmas we can see, hear, and touch is much more than meets the eye. Teach them the symbolism behind the customs and traditions of Christmas we now observe. Teach them what it is they truly represent."

Santa reached into his bag and pulled out a tiny Christmas tree and set it on my mantle. "Teach them about the Christmas tree. Green is the first color of Christmas. The stately evergreen with its unchanging color represents the hope of eternal life in Jesus. It's needles point heavenward as a reminder that man's thoughts should turn heavenward as well."



"Red," said Santa, "is the second color of Christmas." He pulled forth a red ornament for the tiny tree. "Red is deep, intense, vivid. It is the color of the life-giving blood that flows through our veins. Teach the children that Christ gave His life and shed His blood for them that they might have eternal life. When they see the color red it should remind them of that most wonderful gift."

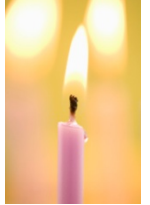
Santa reached into his bag again and pulled out a shiny star and placed it at the top of the small tree. The star was the heavenly sign of promise. God promised a Savior for the world and the star was the sign of the fulfillment of that promise of the night that Jesus Christ was born. Teach the children that God always fulfills His promises and that wise men still seek Him."





Santa found a bell in his pack and placed it on the tree. “Just as lost sheep are guided to safety by the sound of the bell; it continues to ring today for all to be guided to the fold. Teach the children to follow the true Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.”

Santa placed a candle on the mantle and lit it. The soft glow from the one tiny flame brightened the room. “The glow of the candle represents how man can show his thanks for the gift of God’s son who was born that Christmas eve long ago. Teach the children to follow in Christ’s footsteps, to go about doing good. Teach them to let their lights shine before men that all may see it and glorify God. That is what is symbolized when the twinkly lights shine on the tree like hundreds of bright shining candles, each of them representing one of God’s precious children, their light shining for all to see.”



Again, Santa reached into his bag and this time he brought forth a tiny red and white striped candy cane. As he hung it on the tree, his spoke softly, “The candy cane is a stick of hard, white candy: White to symbolize the Virgin birth and sinless nature of Jesus; The shape “J” to represent the precious name of Jesus who came to earth as our Savior. It also represents the crook the Good Shepherd uses to reach down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like sheep, have gone astray. The original candy cane had three small red stripes which are the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed, and the large red stripe that represents the shed blood of Jesus so that we can have eternal life. Teach these things to the children.”

Next he pulled from his bag a gift and said, “Teach the children that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”



Santa brought out a beautiful wreath made of fresh, fragrant greenery and tied with a bright red bow. “The bow reminds us of the bond of perfection which is love. The wreath embodies all the good things about Christmas for those with eyes to see and hearts to understand. It contains the colors of red and green and the heaven turned needles of the evergreen. The bow tells the story of good will towards all and its color again reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice. Then its very shape is symbolic, representing eternity and the eternal nature of Christ’s love. It is a circle without beginning and without end. These are the things you must teach the children.”



“But where does that leave you, Santa?” I asked.

The tears gone now from his eyes, a smile broke over Santa’s face. “Why, bless you my dear,” he laughed. “I’m only a symbol myself. I represent the spirit of family fun and the joy of giving and receiving.”

“I think I’m beginning to understand at last,” I replied.

Santa looked back at me and was pleased, the twinkle in his eyes and he said, “Remember teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is and I bow down to worship Him our Lord and God.”

Before sharing the story, have each of these items ready to bring out for the children:

- Christmas tree
- Red ornament
- Shiny star
- Bell
- Candle
- Candy cane
- Gift
- Wreath